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ART. XII.—*On the Inscriptions found in the region of El-Hdrrah, in the Great Desert South-east and East of the Haurân.* By CYRIL C. GRAHAM.

IN the following pages I propose, first, to give a short account of the locality in which the remarkable inscriptions which accompany this memoir were found, and of the circumstances which led to their discovery, and then to offer a few remarks on the nature of the inscriptions themselves, and of the method I have employed in endeavouring to decipher them.

It will be seen that little else has been done beyond surmising as to the tribe of language to which these inscriptions belong, nor with such very meagre data could we reasonably hope for greater results. If I have succeeded in establishing that these inscriptions are nearly allied to the Himyaritic language, we have already a foundation upon which to build as soon as more specimens of these characters shall reach us.

I had employed the spring and the greater part of the summer of the year 1857 in carefully examining the topography of Palestine. From the accounts I had read in Burekhardt, and especially from the descriptions given to me by the Rev. J. L. Porter, of the remarkable country south of Damascus, called the Haurân, with its numerous cities of stone, I had determined, as soon as the great heats should be passed, to make a journey through that district.

Mr. Porter likewise spoke to me of numerous deserted cities in the plain east of the Haurân, which he had seen in the distance, as Burekhardt and Seetzen had done before him, but which no one had ever visited. The inducement was naturally very great to explore a country so totally unknown, and to attempt a journey which, if successful, must yield so much of interest. The few travellers who had been in the Haurân, had already drawn attention to the high antiquity of the houses and other buildings there, and Mr. Porter in his admirable work,* had stated it as his opinion, and had certainly gone far to prove, that many of the houses which are now standing in the Haurân, were the dwellings of the old inhabitants of Bashan, the ancient Rephaim, who had been conquered by the children of Israel. Many of the cities of the Haurân have names, which we find

* "Five Years in Damascus."

that cities in Bashan bore in the earliest times, and although some might be inclined to doubt the great age of the actual buildings, no one could help being convinced of the antiquity of the cities. What might there not be then in the immense unexplored tract east of Bashan?

Burckhardt too, on reaching the summit of the high chain of mountains which form the eastern limit of the Haurân, had seen some of those cities of the desert, and had felt the strongest desire to visit them. He was, however, unsuccessful, his guides would not venture into the desert for fear of the Arabs, and to his infinite regret he was forced to turn again westwards.

All these accounts conspired to give me a vivid interest in the Haurân, and all that was associated with it, and I determined, unless it were utterly impossible, to explore the desert for some distance east of the mountains of the Drûz Jebel ed-Druz. Immediately before starting on the journey, I made an excursion to the lakes east of Damascus, and to some ruins beyond them. One of the divisions of the great tribe of the Anezi was encamped near the lakes, and some of these Arabs accompanied me in my ride.

From them I made enquiries about the country south-east of us, and from what they told me, vague though their information was, I was convinced that the results of my journey would be valuable.

My first object was to reach a wild volcanic district far east of the Haurân, called es-Safâh. It has been figured in most of the maps, but always incorrectly; Burckhardt and Zimmermann placing it close to the Haurân, and Porter, who removed it out into the desert to nearly its right position, having represented it correctly enough as a volcanic tract, but with this mistake, that instead of a solitary hill, a whole range of hills rises from within the rocky margin. This, however, could not be ascertained without going there, since from the lakes east of Damascus, and from those parts of the Haurân which have been visited by former travellers, only the two highest peaks of the range could be seen, and thus the mistake arose.

On reaching Shuhba,* شحبا I consulted with the Drûz sheikh about the best method of performing my journey. He was happily on good terms at the moment, with the tribe of Arabs who, during the rainy season, actually frequented the Safâh. An arrangement

* I must refer the reader who wishes to examine the geography of the Haurân, to Mr. Porter's map in the work before cited, or to the map appended to my memoir in the *Journal of the Royal Geographical Society for 1859*, or to Kiepert's map of Palestine.

was made with their chief, and I was soon on the way to his tents, which were pitched on the ridge just overhanging the desert. With an escort of this tribe I started on the following day for es-Safâh. Soon after leaving the foot of the mountains, I found the plain, elsewhere so rich and fruitful, covered with innumerable basaltic stones, rounded like boulders as if by the action of water, and well polished, and withal lying so close together that the dromedaries could scarcely make their way across them. This volcanic tract, which extends for nearly five days eastwards, and is in breadth, that is from north to south, of two days' journey, is called by the Arabs el-Hârrah; I journeyed through it almost all night, and on the following day towards two P.M., reached the southernmost point of es-Safâh.

It would be out of place here to give an account of the physical geography of the country; I will only mention that the Safâh is composed of a mass of wild igneous rocks, which rise abruptly out of the plain, and are tossed about and rent in such a manner, that the whole may be best compared to the ruined appearance presented by the moon when viewed through a good telescope.

Out of this rocky district rises a chain of hills called Tellûl es-Safâh, likewise basaltic.

On the eastern edge are five ancient towns, one of them of considerable size, and the more remarkable because a large building of *white* stone is found in it.

The stones are square and beautifully cut, and although the building evidently never was finished, yet its plan is sufficiently distinct to make one believe it was intended for a castle or strong place of defence.

In what age it was built, or by whom, is a mystery to me. It is evidently much more modern than the houses of which the town is composed; these bear the same marks of high antiquity as the old houses of Bashan, and the same massive stone doors are found here that are invariably found in them.

The other four towns are likewise very ancient.

I tried to extract from the Arabs any traditions which might be extant with regard to the white ruin Khirbet el-Bêida, as it is called; but all they could tell me was that a great sultan had once dwelt there, who was rich in camels and flocks, and in herds, and that his daughter, who was more beautiful than the sun, had lived in a palace far, some distance to the east of the Safâh. The sultan had been very mighty, and had ruled over the whole country until he was overcome by Tamerlenk, who put him to death and laid waste all the towns about the Safâh.

Riding along the eastern border of es-Safâh, I suddenly noticed a stone lying on the ground which had some marks on it; I looked at it rather carelessly, but soon after, finding another stone similarly marked, I examined it, and immediately discovered that they were distinct characters: I copied them, and looked about anxiously for more.

Presently I found another stone with a palm tree engraved on it, and some characters written below the picture. It was while I was speculating about these marks, that I suddenly came upon the town with the white building. In vain I sought for inscriptions in the town, although I found a well sculptured lion and other objects, not scratched on the stone but in actual relief. From the fact of the inscriptions which I had hitherto found, being always isolated and at regular distances from each other, I at first conceived that I might have before me ancient milestones, and consequently that I might be on the road to some important ancient cities.

The Arabs told me that to the north-east lay a city called Sêis, built of red stone. The name sounded almost Egyptian, and I began to speculate whether this might have been a portion of a road between the Red Sea and the Euphrates, made in the time when Egyptians used to go up to Kharkhemish.

The first characters that I copied too, were not unlike Egyptian numerals *10* and *100*, and although I was forced afterwards to give up the idea of any Egyptian origin in these inscriptions, I still think that these stones marked the distance between two cities. I wished much to have visited Sêis, but was forced to give it up, in consequence of the report of my scouts that the place was occupied by a division of the Anezi, who have perpetual blood-feud with the Arabs of the Safâh. I consequently went more to the east, visited the house where the daughter of the sultan had once dwelt, and then I came upon a place in the desert where *every stone was covered with inscriptions*. I found subsequently several such places, where every stone within a given space bore the mark of some beast or other figure, with an accompanying inscription. Frequently these spots were not near the remains of any town, although in many cases ruins of houses, and in some instances well preserved houses of stone were found near them. Such was the case in the remarkable Wâdi el Warrân, in which I found the curious mace, or idol—or whatever it be intended for,—of red stone, which is in the museum of the Society. Of the inscriptions I copied a great number, some of which are given in the plates at the end of this memoir. I likewise have copied carefully the figures of camels and other representations, in order to shew the style in which they were done. I should remark that I discovered

an ancient road leading directly through el-Hárrah,* and which appears to have been the high way between Basrah† and Tadmor. And now that I have given this account by way of preface, the reader may the more clearly know where es-Safáh and el-Hárrah exactly lie. I will proceed with the enquiry as to what the language may be in which these inscriptions are written, and then consider what method may be employed in order to decipher them.

In the first place, do any of them appear to be bilingual?

On many of the stones I found certainly two *kinds* of writing, one in which the characters were double, (see the Plates) and the other in which the characters were more slanting and differently formed. I at first thought that these were really two distinct characters, and that such inscriptions might be in two languages, but on carefully comparing them, the double character seems to be the same as the other. It is true that the inscriptions 21 and 31 appear more Semitic than any of the others, and at one time I thought they might be a form of Palmyrene writing; but although some of the characters, as the *ſ* and the *ʃ* might be supposed to represent the Palmyrene *𐤔* and *𐤕*, yet the others do not in the least agree with the writing of Palmyra.

Since we have then no hope of any of the inscriptions being bilingual, what method can be employed in order to decipher this unknown character? What data have we?

None, I fear, except those afforded by considerations as to the probable history of the country. From Arab writers, as far as I am aware, we seem to know very little of the country east of the Haurân. Abulfeda, who is so very minute in his descriptions of the geography of Syria, deserts us when we go beyond the Castle of Salkhad, nor even in scripture history do we appear to have any notice of this country.

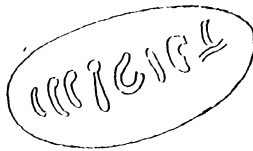
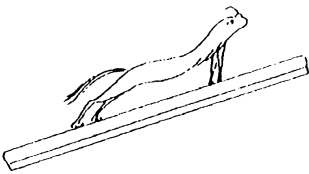
Who then could the people have been who built these cities? and were the authors of these inscriptions the original settlers or of another race? I have elsewhere stated, that from the style of the houses and of the towns, I believe them to have been the work of the old Rephaim, who were the founders of the cities of Bashan. But the inscriptions I believe to have been the work of another race, and of a much later

* Written الحرد and es-Safáh الصنادا

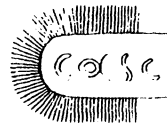
† Basrah of the Haurân; I mean the place written indiscriminately بصره and بصرى although the former is no doubt correct, corresponding with the Hebrew בצרה.

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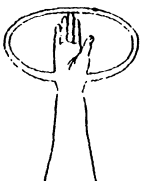
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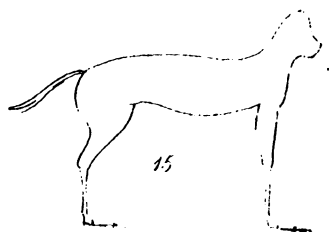
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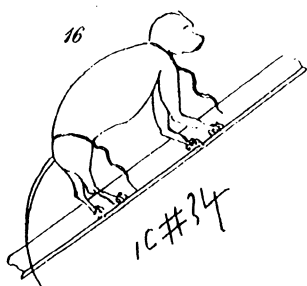
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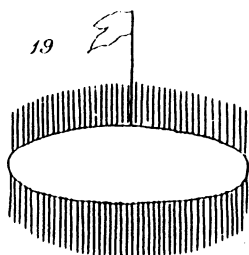
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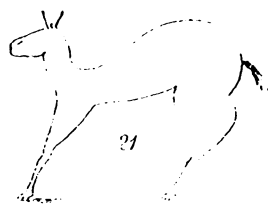
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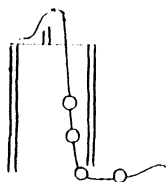
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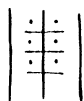


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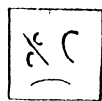
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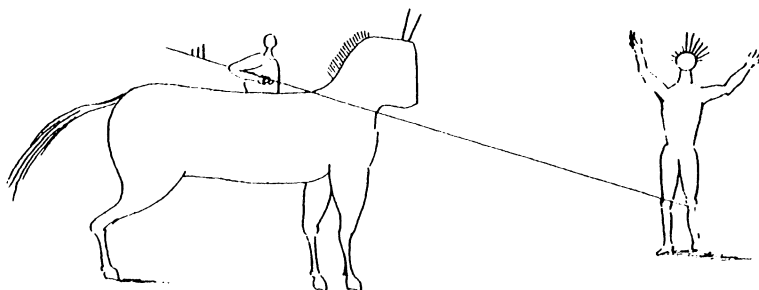


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period. It is remarkable that in the whole of Haurân, where we find the same kind of houses, no inscriptions of a like nature are seen, and therefore, whoever the people were who made them, they confined themselves to the country east of Haurân, and were totally separated from the inhabitants of Bashan. The only sure ground that we have upon which to start is, the high probability that the language is Semitic. We have no instance of any other than a Semitic language occurring in this part of Asia, and unless we ascribe to these writings so high an antiquity, as to suppose them the work of the Rephaim, who most certainly did not speak Semitic, we can hardly entertain the slightest doubt of the tribe of language to which they must belong. Assuming then that they are the characters of a Semitic language, to which of the many dialects included under that head is it most probable that they should belong? When first I laid the inscriptions before the Society, it was surmised that they were a form of the Phœnician, and a very high authority stated it to be his belief that they were the most ancient form of Phœnician writing which we have yet seen; that they might even be the character out of which the older form of Phœnician writing sprung. Now on carefully comparing all the characters with both the older and more recent Phœnician writings, I cannot find above *five signs* which are strictly Phœnician, and out of these, four are common to both the Phœnician and Himyaritic writings. I do not think either that I should have expected *a priori*, to find any direct analogy between the Phœnician and a language which existed (unless we suppose these writings to be the work of pilgrims from a distant part), in a country so many days inland; for, with all their greatness, the Phœnicians were always essentially a maritime nation, and they did not make extensions of their territory eastwards. For some time I was strongly of opinion that they might be of the same class of writing as the well known Sinaitic inscriptions. These, like the ones before us, were constantly accompanied by the rude drawing of some animal, and from the unaccountably irregular manner in which they were scattered about over the whole of el-Hârrah, I was continually reminded of the inscriptions in the Wadis of the peninsula of Sinai. But on comparing the two sets of inscriptions, no analogy sufficiently strong could be traced, to encourage one in the hope that they might be of the same class.

There was however, another language of the Semitic branch, which was spoken in former times by a people of Southern Arabia, who likewise had a character of their own, whose language and writings were still extant in the time of Mohammed. This was the nation of Himyar, and their language was known by the name

Himyarî, and by us called Himyaritic. Its existence was historically known in Europe long before any specimens ever reached us of the writing; the Arab writers repeatedly make mention of the old Himyarî writing and language, especially Makrizî, who, as De Sacy and Rüdiger have pointed out, refers to tablets and rocks in different parts, which are engraved with Himyarî characters. It was not, however, until the present century, that any inscriptions in this character were brought to Europe. Niebuhr in the middle of the last century, was the first traveller who perhaps ever saw one, then Seetzen, who in 1810, at Dhafâr, discovered these inscriptions, two of which he copied. But the largest and most valuable, are those which were found in Southern Arabia, by the British expedition sent to make a survey of the coast of Arabia in 1829. At Sana, the capital of Yemen, and at Hisn Ghorâb, north-east of Aden, and at Naqb el Hajar, important inscriptions were found, copies of which were soon placed in the hands of the learned in Europe. Gesenius and Rüdiger lost no time in endeavouring to decipher them, and the results of the latter, who pursued the subject farther than Gesenius did, were published in a treatise entitled "*Versuch über die Himyaritischen Schriftmonumente*," Halle, 1841, and developed and appended to his translation of Wellsted's Travels in Arabia, 1842; to both of which works I have been greatly indebted.

The moment I compared my inscriptions with the specimens we have of the Himyaritic, and with the alphabets afforded us by two MSS. in the Royal Library at Berlin, I was struck with the exact resemblance that some of the characters in mine bore to the others, and on examining more minutely, I could not help feeling convinced that the resemblance was not merely accidental. I soon picked out ten signs which were *identical* in the two cases, and after a long and close comparison, I think I can determine the value of six more, that is of sixteen signs in all. Now, I think, if this be once admitted, we cannot but suppose that in these inscriptions east of the Haurân, we have specimens of a writing, which, though not purely Himyaritic, is nevertheless very much allied to it. Hitherto, it is true, the Himyarites have been supposed to be a nation of Southern Arabia, but was Arabia their original country? May not these characters be the more ancient form, out of which the Himyaritic itself sprang? and may we not be guided by this to the fact, that the Himyarites originally came from much further north or north-east, perhaps from the Euphrates or Mesopotamia, and then gradually worked their way down into Central and Southern Arabia? Indeed, after all, it is only the coast country of Arabia that we can

be said to know anything of. How many inscriptions may there not be in the Nejd ? from some reports which have been brought by the Arabs, all about Jebel Shâmmar there are innumerable rock inscriptions, and there are ancient towns in the desert between the Haurân and the Euphrates, where curious writings have been found, copies of which have unfortunately never reached us. There were some inscriptions discovered by the adventurous Wallin, in Belad Sôf, in Central Arabia, two of which I have before me. They were at once acknowledged to be neither Sinaitic, nor purely Himyaritic, and these I find bear a very close resemblance indeed, to the Hârrah inscriptions. Wallin was unfortunately much pressed for time, and was unable, on account of hostile Arab tribes, to copy often, but he says in his memoir, that he found these characters constantly recurring; and when it is considered that he merely took a path directly through Arabia, not deviating to the right or left, we may imagine how much there is yet to be found in those parts.

This convinces me more than ever of the truth of what I said above, viz., that one great race formerly overran all these parts, and eventually settled in Southern Arabia, and formed the dynasties of kings of whom we have more especially heard, under the name of Himyari. From the very close resemblance between the Himyar and old Ethiopic character, we cannot doubt that the origin of the latter was in Arabia; indeed, on the African coast, inscriptions in a character nearly the same as the Himyaritic, have been found. Does not all this too very much strengthen Dr. Barth's views about Semitic immigration into Central Africa ? The rock inscriptions about Murzuk, in the country of the Tawârik, had already arrested the attention in 1819 and 1820, of Denham, Oudney, and Clapperton; and Barth was immediately struck on seeing these Hârrah inscriptions, with similarity between them and those of the Tawârik ! I have not had an opportunity as yet of seeing any of these Tawârik rock inscriptions, but I hope that those who are interested in oriental palæography, will examine all these writings carefully; it is by comparison alone that we can hope for any results, especially in such a branch of study as philology and ethnology. These may, like the Sinaitic rock scratches, be the work only of ignorant men; they may enumerate a journey undertaken from some religious motive, but even proper names have an inestimable value, and when properly compared, may afford us a clue to much that relates to past history. And how much light may we not have thrown on all these things, when taken in conjunction with the monumental inscriptions of Egypt. I only refer the reader to the great results in the two

admirable works of Brugsch, which are the foundation almost of a new science. He has shewn how much may be made out of names, and in a country where every name is stereotyped. As the fossil bones of old creatures are raked up and examined, and made, under the hand of a Cuvier or an Owen, to tell us of the structure of the whole animal kingdom thousands of years back, so these names may and will tell us of a people long gone by, and guide us to knowledge of a history which was thought to be hopelessly lost. This comparison of names is a new science, and may almost be termed fossil geography.

I will now lay before the reader a list of the particular characters in the Hârrah inscriptions which appear to me to be identical with those in the Himyaritic writings, and assign to them their probable values.

| | Hârrah. | Himyaritic. | Hebrew. | Arabic. |
|-----|---------|-------------|---------|---------|
| 1. | 𐤀 | 𐤀 | ב | ب |
| 2. | 𐤁 | 𐤁 | כ | ك |
| 3. | 𐤂 | 𐤂 | ד | ذ |
| 4. | 𐤃 | 𐤃 | ע | ع |
| 5. | 𐤄 | 𐤄 | ג | ج |
| 6. | 𐤅 | 𐤅 | ק | ق |
| 7. | 𐤆 | 𐤆 | ע | غ |
| 8. | 𐤇 | 𐤇 | ו | و |
| 9. | 𐤈 | 𐤈 | ת | ث |
| 10. | 𐤉 | 𐤉 | ש | س |
| 11. | 𐤊 | 𐤊 | ש | ش |
| 12. | 𐤋 | 𐤋 | ת | ث |
| 13. | 𐤌 | 𐤌 | ר | ر |
| 14. | 𐤍 | 𐤍 | פ | پ |
| 15. | 𐤎 | 𐤎 | ח | ح |
| 5a. | 𐤏 | 𐤏 | ג | ج |
| 16. | 𐤐 | 𐤐 | ד | د |

Of these the 𐤃 𐤄 𐤂 𐤅 are common to the Phœnician and Himyaritic alphabets. But there are two letters which are so very marked, and so essentially belonging to the Himyaritic and the allied

Ethiopic character, that they alone would go far to confirm the supposed analogy of these inscriptions with the Himyaritic. They are the K and the H . On the other hand there are $\text{9} = \text{r}$ or r , and $\text{F} = \text{n}$, $\text{Z} = \text{d}$ or z which are early Greek or Phœnician signs.

The letter C or D which so frequently occurs, I take to be a Hebrew r , and to represent the more usual Himyari form S , S , D , and in the inscription at Saba in Abyssinia it really has that form.

Of the remaining letters some of them are remarkable enough, but have neither a Phœnician nor Himyaritic appearance. There is one L , which occurs very frequently, and I know it as otherwise occurring only in the Runic alphabet. The \bullet which so frequently occurs, I suppose to mark the division between words as the I does in Himyaritic. The sign 9 is likewise similar to the $\text{9} = \text{r}$ of the Sinaitic, and the F resembles the Sinaitic $\text{F} = \text{w}$. Still a great number remain unexplained, but it must be clear how very distant the claim of the Phœnician and Sinaitic characters is to any similarity with these inscriptions found with the close resemblance between these and the Himyari. The richness of the alphabet seems very astonishing. I have counted certainly fifty distinct signs. The inscriptions were so well cut into the hard basalt that every mark was perfectly clear, and the copies which were taken may be relied upon.

We have, however, not nearly enough of them yet to encourage us in setting about reading them. The inscriptions, too, are very short, containing doubtless little more than a proper name, and thus leading one to suppose that this must all have been holy ground. On the supposition that these words celebrate pilgrimages, some leading expressions should be sought for, such as מלך , זיר or זאר , שלם , בו or בר , &c.













I will now go rapidly through the inscriptions themselves.


- (1) is very remarkable, and the same group occurs over and over again in El-Hârrah. I copied it three times.
- In (15) we have one of the hunting dogs of the Arabs called "Sillijah."
- (16). A well executed monkey. It is to be remarked that he is tied round the neck and round the loins, and therefore probably a pet animal, or one that has been brought from another country as a tribute.

- (19). Occurred very often ; but I cannot conceive what it is intended to represent. .
- (22). Is probably a well and a man at the top hauling up the bucket, and
- (26). Reminds one of the mystic tree in the Nineveh sculptures.

I had written this short account of the Hârrah inscriptions last year, and had dispatched a copy from Thebes for publication. Unfortunately the despatch never came to hand, and thus a whole year of delay has occurred in publishing it. Since I wrote this my attention has been drawn to other things, and having been continually in Egypt, I have not heard if anything further has been done with regard to the deciphering of these inscriptions in Germany. I have, however, a few more remarks to make in connection with this subject. 1. Professor Lepsius has called my attention to a very curious inscription which I had overlooked, and which had been copied by Wellsted in the *Wâdi el Maye* nearly opposite the Qoseir. I see that Rödiger only just mentions it. It is the only one of the kind Wellsted found, and is itself too short, without any other assistance, to be read. It also is evidently allied to the Himyaritic, but it contains many characters which do not belong to that alphabet. Some of the most remarkable signs in the Hârrah inscriptions are found in this one, and it likewise resembles these in the astonishing number of apparently distinct characters which it contains. In that short inscription, which can, at most, contain a dozen words, there are more signs than would make a whole alphabet. This again, one might suppose, would be identical with the Wallin inscriptions, but it is not.

The following are the signs which are most similar to each other in the Hârrah and the Wâdi il Maye inscriptions :

| Hârrah. | Wâdi el Maye. |
|---|---|
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |

There is also the sign  which constantly occurs in all the Hârrah inscriptions, and elsewhere I find it only in the Etruscan, nor is

this perhaps so surprising after the late researches of Professor Stickel.¹

2. There has been a report that inscriptions very similar to those in the Peninsula of Sinai are found in the cataract country of the Nile, especially in the quarries near Asuân. This is decidedly an error. I carefully examined every Wâdi last winter, and had such inscriptions existed they could not have escaped me. I found very great numbers of inscriptions in the Egyptian *Demotic* character, which most probably have given rise to the mistake. Also on the leg of one of the colossi at Abusimbel in Nubia I found, among the inscriptions in so many languages which commemorate the visits of travellers from the Pharaonic times down to yesterday, one remarkable inscription in a character with which I was not acquainted, but which most nearly resembles the old Ethiopic. At the same spot are some curious Phœnician inscriptions, some of the characters in which differ from any I have hitherto seen, although they most nearly approach to the Punic form of writing. In the course of next year I hope to again visit the Haurân, and thence to penetrate into Central Arabia and the Jebel Shammar. The results of such a journey cannot but be of great value, and must throw light on the subject I have been considering.

CAIRO, September 23rd, 1859.

¹ "Das Etruskische als semitische Sprache." Leipzig, 1858.

The works referred to in this memoir, and which the reader may find it interesting to consult, are Rüdiger "Versuch über die Himyaritischen Schriftmonumente," Halle, 1841. Wellsted "Travels in Arabia," translated by Rüdiger, with an essay on the Himyar language. Tuch "Sinaitische Inschriften," in the *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft*, Dritter Band; Heft ii., part 1, 1849. *Sinaitic Inscriptions*, published by the Royal Society of Literature, vol. ii., part 1, 1832. Gesenius "Phönizien." Ewald "Über die Grosse Phönizische Inschrift von Sidon, &c," Göttingen, 1856. "Five Years in Damascus," by Rev. J. L. Porter. "Travels in Syria," Burckhardt. Seetzen's Travels. Wallin's route in Arabia, in the *Journal of Royal Geographical Society*, vol. xx., part 2, 1851; and my own Memoir of my Travels East of the Haurân in the vol. for 1859.